



Does Ethical Positioning Relate to Fear of Death?

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INTRODUCTION

- TMT is a way to cope with the discomfort an individual feels when encountering the certainty of death and irrational hopes of immortality, and is rooted in Freud's (1927) psychoanalytic theory of fear of one's death
- Greenberg, Simon, Harmon-Jones, Solomon, Pyszczynski, and Lyon (1995) found that those thinking about their own mortality gave harsher bonds to for prostitutes, thus the hypothesis of students being more likely to change their conviction of the man accused of soliciting prostitution after thinking about their own death
- May help to understand why violence occurs
- More research needs to be done on ethical decision making and the processes involving it
- Language analysis can be very helpful in understanding the thought processes of others

Hypotheses and Research Questions

1. Does EPQ score reflect any differences in how the man accused of solicitation of a prostitute elicit higher or lower penalties than others?
The prediction is that those who are more on the side of moral absolutes (absolutist and exceptionist) will give stricter penalties by using more words relating to money
2. Does EPQ score give more or less fear of one's own death using words relating to death.
The prediction is that those who are in the moral absolutes will use fewer words related to the questioning of what will happen after death because they do not always question prior learning experiences
3. Is there an effect between thoughts of one's own death give way to harsher punishments to the man accused of solicitation?
The prediction is that those who are in the death condition will give harsher punishments to the man than those in the day condition by using words relating to death and money

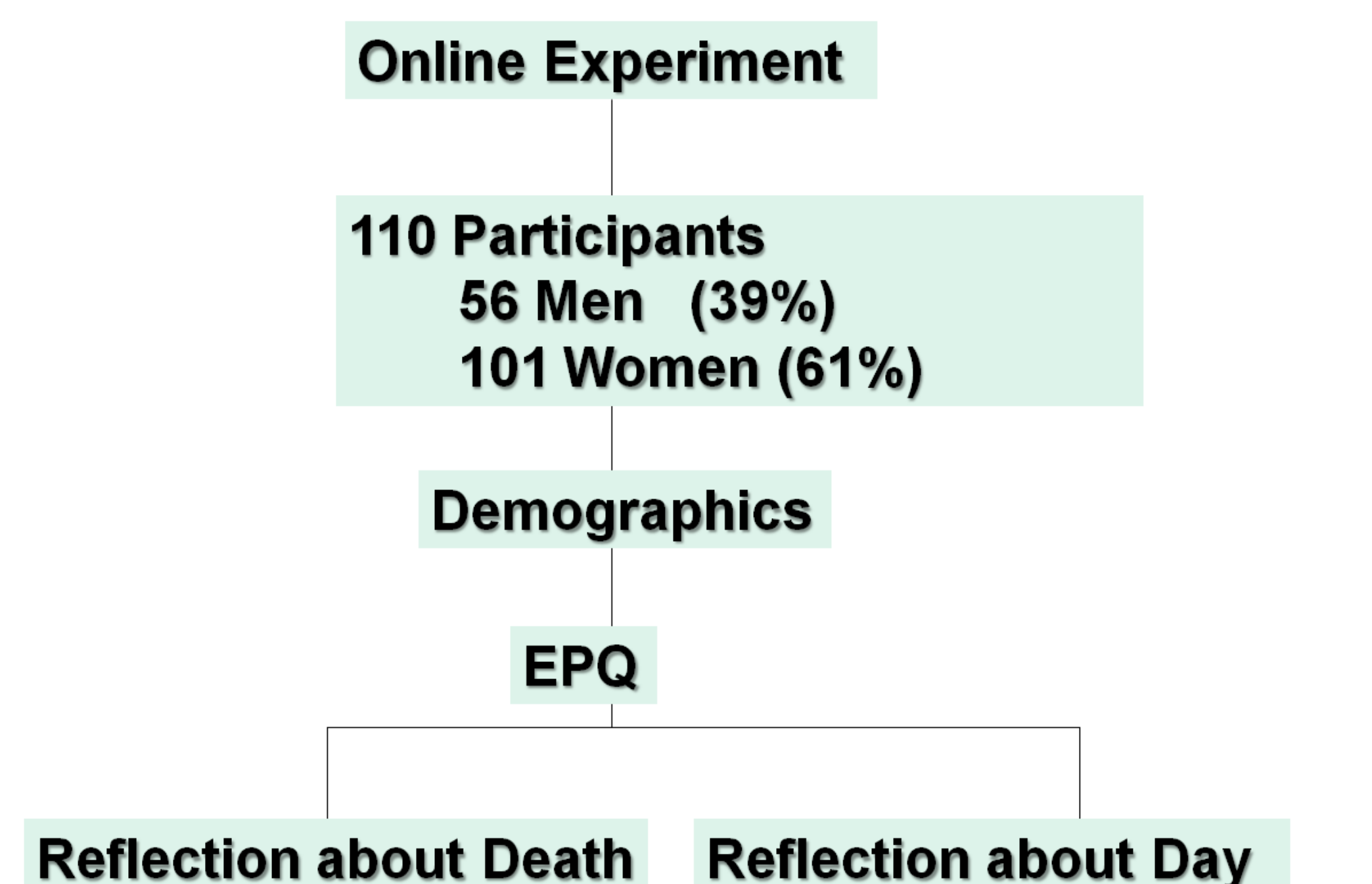
TERROR MANAGEMENT THEORY

Terror Management Theory (TMT): A social psychology to explain violence as a construct of a fear of one's own mortality

Ethics Positioning Questionnaire

- Ethics Positioning Questionnaire (EPQ): Four position on moral viewpoints
- **Absolutist:** Morals are absolutes and cannot be altered for any reason
 - **Exceptionist:** Morals are guidelines, but exceptions can be made
 - **Subjectivist:** Morals are based on personal values rather than universal principles
 - **Situationist:** Morals depend on a given situation and are not always applicable in the same way

METHOD



A Muslim man is found soliciting sex from a prostitute in the United States. He is a full citizen of the United States of America, and thus is tried as one. He is convicted under laws of being a customer to prostitution. Different states have different penalties for this offense. Please give your opinion as to how harsh his punishment should be. Include possible jail time, fines, labeling of the crime, etc.

Thoughts about Online Experiments

Affective Processes Mean Summary Table

	Reflection		Conviction		F-Value
	Day	Death	Day	Death	
Affective Processes	3.83	5.14	4.42	2.36	1.11
Positive Emotion	1.99	1.42	1.84	2.68	2.12
Negative emotion	0.63	0.21	2.56	0.19	3.15
Anxiety	0.39	0.61	0.14	2.02	0.49
Anger	0.31	0.18	1.98	0.07	0.47
Sadness	17.80	19.12	0.16	20.93	0.89

Cognitive Mechanisms Mean Summary Table

	Reflection		Conviction		F-Value
	Day	Death	Day	Death	
Cognitive Mechanisms	2.33	4.83	20.18	3.36	2.45
Insight	1.73	1.51	3.23	1.33	1.05
Discrepancies	1.46	3.97	6.18	3.87	1.53
Tentativeness	1.34	1.39	3.28	1.25	1.58
Certainty	0.12	0.26	1.87	0.12	1.26

RESULTS

A univariate analysis of variance (ANOVA) was performed to assess the main effects and interaction effects:

- Independent variable of the EPQ score and words using negative emotion in the essays about a participants' own death and the conviction $F(3,108) = 3.15, p < .01$. The partial $\eta^2 = 0.14$ indicating a large effect size.
- Independent variable of the EPQ score and words using discrepancies in the essays on conviction $F(3,108) = 2.48, p < .05$. The partial $\eta^2 = 0.18$ indicates a large effect size
- Independent variable of the EPQ score and words describing feelings across conditions. $F(3,108) = 1.95, p < .01$. The partial $\eta^2 = .17$ indicating a large effect size
- Independent variable of the EPQ score and words using cognitive mechanisms across conditions, $F(3,108) = 2.45, p < .01$. The partial $\eta^2 = .16$ indicating a large effect size

DISCUSSION

- All three hypotheses were refuted, however there were still significant results
- There was a significant interaction between EPQ score and words that express negative emotion, the pattern might suggest that ethical positions may relate to fear of death and violence that occurs when people perceive others who are different
- Future research should be done with brain imaging systems to see if similar systems are activated when thinking about death as when violence occurs
- Limitations: online experiment, not generalized, language analyzing software may not always catch the right words
- Implications: thinking of one's own death does not have a lot to do with their moral reasoning, nor does it on giving convictions to someone perceived different than them

Sample Answers (Condition and Conviction)

Day Condition:
Reflection: "I woke up early and couldn't get back to sleep. It gave me extra time to relax in the morning before school though, so I guess it wasn't all bad. I drove to school around noon. Since it's Friday, I was pretty worn out from the week. As the week goes by, the drive to and from school gets more and more frustrating for me for some reason, regardless of how the traffic actually is. Classes for the day went by pretty fast though, and weren't too stressful. After class, my friends and I planned on going out tonight, which I'm not actually looking forward to, because after a stressful week I kinda like Friday nights to myself. Still, it should be fun. I bought some dinner and liquor for the party on my way home from school, and then then sat down and did this survey. Good times, man."

Conviction: "I don't think soliciting prostitutes should be a crime in the first place, so I'd give him no punishment at all, and let him walk out of the courthouse like nothing happened."

Death Condition:
Reflection: "I think that after death I will go to heaven. There is no proof that heaven is real, but it is what I believe in. I think that I will have lived a long life, and it will be filled with helping others. I genuinely try to always be on the lookout for others' welfare, and when there is something that I can do to help them, I usually do. There are many things I would like to do to help people, most importantly going into teaching or translation-type services. I think that careers in both of these fields are very necessary, and they benefit others more than could be imagined. I would like to think that when I die I will be remembered as the type of person that will be remembered for the good that they do for others, and that I will have made an impact on the lives of many. I would also like to pass my beliefs about helping others onto my family."

Conviction: "I think the punishment for the crime should be at least a year in jail an a fine of a couple thousand dollars. But I also feel that the prostitute should be penalized the same. I think his punishment should be the same as what everyone in the same state would get in the same situation."

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